

Serial No. 10/649,026

Amendment to the Specification:

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 6, line 1 as follows:

Pivot support mount 50 further includes a central pivot mount 82 coupled to base 56 and positioned between each alignment ~~[[tab]]~~ guide 70, as shown in FIGS. 2 and 2a, for example. A space 48 is provided between central pivot mount 82 and each alignment guide 70, as shown in FIG. 2a. As is discussed below, a position of carrying handle 32 is received within each space 48. Central pivot mount 82 has a curved outer surface 142 as discussed in more detail below. Although central ~~ivot~~ pivot mount 82 is provided, it is within the scope of the disclosure to include a shaft coupled to and positioned to extend between alignment guides 70 as well. As is discussed in greater detail below, a portion of alignment bracket 54 engages the curved surface 142 of shaft 82 when the first and second legs 22, 24 of step ladder 10 are adjacent each other in the collapsed position.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 7, line 11 as follows:

Looking now to FIG. 2, alignment bracket 54 includes a base 110 formed to define an aperture 111 for receiving rear leg 24 therethrough. Illustrative base 110 includes a top wall ~~[[111]]~~ 112, a bottom wall 114 spaced-apart from top wall 112, and opposite side walls 116, 118 coupled to and positioned to extend between top and bottom walls 112, 114. Alignment bracket 54 is coupled to rear leg 24 by a fastener 120, similar to fastener 52, which extends through an aperture 124 formed in top wall 112 and an aperture 126 formed through web 37 between third and fourth tubular members 36, 38 of rear leg 24 as suggested in Fig. 6. Similar to fastener 52, fastener 120 extends into an anchor-receiving channel 122 defined by the companion third and fourth tubular members 36, 38 and the web 37 located between the companion third and fourth tubular members 36, 38 as shown in FIGS. 6-8. Fastener 120 extends through aperture 124 and aperture 126 to anchor alignment bracket 54 in a fixed position relative to rear right leg 24.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 8, line 3 as follows:

Alignment portion 130 of alignment bracket ~~[[53]]~~ 54 further includes an alignment tab 150 coupled to ~~bracket-portion~~ base 110. Illustratively, alignment tab 150 is coupled to both bottom wall 114 and first side wall 116 of ~~bracket-portion~~ base 110 and lies substantially in alignment with bottom wall 114, as shown in FIGS. 6-8. As is discussed in more detail below, alignment tab 150 is provided to engage a bottom wall 152 of second tubular member 28, front right leg 22 when the step ladder 10 is in the collapsed position, as shown in FIGS. 7 and 8.

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Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 9, line 23 as follows:

Looking now to FIG. 7, step ladder 10 is in the collapsed position. Pivot support mount 50 and alignment bracket ~~[[32]]~~ 54 are engaged with each other in an unlocked position. As mentioned above, handle 32 is movable between the unlocked position shown in FIG. 7, the ready-to-carry and locked position shown in FIG. 8 and the stowed locked position shown in FIG. 5. In the two locked positions, the handle 32 retains the alignment bracket 54 and pivot support mount 50 in engagement with each other to lock the pivot support mount 50 and the alignment bracket 54 to each other. As shown in FIGS. 3 and 7, front and rear frame portions 13, 15 of step ladder 10 are in the collapsed and engaged, but unlocked, positions. Handle 32 is also in an unlocked position and is positioned to lie substantially adjacent to pivot support mount 50. Retainers 100 of handle 32 are in a retracted position and do not substantially engage mount 136 of alignment bracket ~~[[56]]~~ 54.